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ABSTRACT

Basil Bernstein's research on the sociology of language indicates that he views language as both subjective and objective. Subjectively, it structures an individual's intentions and thought processes; objectively, it preserves and makes public the store of knowledge of human society. The sharing of language is the basic way in which the objective world becomes part of the individual consciousness. Language gives the individual a way to organize and control phenomena and at the same time, language controls the individual. To classify Bernstein's work as an example of cultural-deficit or educational-disadvantagement explanation of school failure is to ignore the complexity of his formulations and other evidence that suggest he never intended his work to label working-class or minority culture as deficient. His work illustrates how children come to school with "different language patterns" built on social class and family relationships, but does not indicate what or who needs to change. Bernstein's sociology of language looks for ways to recognize and break the "spell" of the patterns taken for granted in language use. A 72-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

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Basil Bernstein's Sociology of Language: Deficit, Difference and Bewitchment

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"But he has got nothing on," said a little child.
"Oh, listen to the innocent," said its father. And one person whispered to the other what the child had said. "He has nothing on--a child says he has nothing on!"
But he has nothing on!" at last cried all the people.
(from "The Emperor's New Clothes" by Hans Christian Andersen).

Introduction

More than thirty years has elapsed since the English sociologist Basil Bernstein's first articles on language and social class appeared in the British Journal of Sociology (Bernstein, 1958; 1959; 1960). Still, there continues to be misunderstanding and misinterpretation over the central meaning of his work, its implications for thinking about the world and its application to school programs. The purpose of this paper is to examine one strand of Bernstein's research on the sociology of language. Based on a critical reading of Bernstein's research, his autobiographical reports and a sampling of the multiple ways in which his work has been applied and criticized by others, the attempt is made to provide a framework for interpreting his work and understanding some of the applications that are derived from it.

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Sources for Bernstein's Theory of Language

This section of the paper will attempt to lightly sketch aspects of Bernstein's early professional career and parallel this discussion with formulations of language. Bernstein (1990) claims the roots of his theory of language and code are to be found in his experiences at the City Day College (1954-1960) which will be discussed in subsequent sections of the paper. He argues for the need to account for school success (or failure) independent of I.Q. Bernstein's early formulations define distinct modes of expression (public-language versus formal language), and a description of some of their attributes (particularistic/universalistic, context dependence/independence, implicitness/explicitness, orientation towards using pronouns, use of commands, use of symbolism, etc.).

Early Career

Bernstein was born on November 1, 1924 in a working class neighborhood in the East End of London (Karabel and Halsey, 1977). In 1945, he was accepted as a resident worker at the Bernhard Baron Settlement in Stepney where he stayed for three years prior to his entrance to the London School of Economics. The Settlement was religious in spirit and purpose based on the principles of Reform Judaism (Karabel and Halsey, 1977).

In 1947, Bernstein was accepted by the London School of Economics to read for a Diploma in Social Science and soon thereafter switched to a course leading to a B.Sc. Economics degree, special subject sociology. Bernstein describes his experiences at the LSE by saying that he did not obtain a 'good' degree. "My work was too undisciplined and I had agonizing difficulties in expressing what I was trying to grasp" (Bernstein, 1971, p. 4). Perhaps, this

admission in the introduction to Class, Codes and Control, Volume 1, warns the reader of the complexity to Bernstein's ideas and the difficulty to be encountered in reading and understanding his work.

In 1954, Bernstein passed the post-graduate certificate in education from the Westminister College of Education. His student-teaching was done at the Kingsway Day College, a noted center of educational innovation in London. Later in 1954, he was appointed to the City Day College as a Grade A teacher where he remained until 1960 (Bernstein, 1971, pp. 4-5).

According to Bernstein, the student body of the City Day College was for the most part working class, some on one-day-a-week work release from the Government Post Office. Of this group some prepared for a Civil Service Exam while most did not. There was also a group from the London Docks. Bernstein taught a variety of subjects including English, history, arithmetic, physical education, motor vehicle maintenance. He was given one-half day a week free of teaching to experiment with curriculum and to use for research.

The experience at the City Day College with working class students is where Bernstein locates the beginning of his research enquiry in speech and language forms. Bernstein's early work focuses on the hypothesis that there is a speech form predicated on the implicit. However, at this stage of his career (1950s), the only evidence that is offered to support this suggestion comes from data concerning verbal tests and performance test score variations between middle class and working class groups and later published as "Language and social class,"(British Journal of Sociology XI, pp. 271-276, 1960).

In 1955, Bernstein reapplied to the London School of Economics to read for a higher degree; this application was turned down. Bernstein continued his work at the City Day College and by the end of the 1950s, his readings on

and study of language had resulted in the publication of two scholarly articles in the British Journal of Sociology (Bernstein, 1958; 1959) and an extended review of the literature.

Early Formulations: Public Language and Formal Language

During these years, Bernstein (1959; 1960; 1961; 1965) defines two distinct modes of expression: a 'public language' and a 'formal language.' A public language is a way of expressing and receiving concrete, global and descriptive relationships at a relatively low level of conceptualization. The talk itself is built around the shared context of the speakers. Imagine, for example, two people attending a movie. Afterwards talking about the movie, one suggests "Wasn't that great, " and the other responds with a vigorous nod. Later, at the home of friends, it requires an hour to communication the essence of the statement "Wasn't that great?" to the people who had not seen the movie. Bernstein (1961) refers to this context specific way of speaking as public language:

> The (public) linguistic form is a ... preference to be aroused by, and respond to, that which is immediately given, rather than to the implications of a matrix of relationships (p. 302).

Examples of differences between public and formal language are examined. When a statement of fact is used as both reason and conclusion, the authority and legitimacy of the statement resides in the social relationship rather than the principles of reason. Although categoric statements may exist for both public and formal language users, the frequency and dependence on categoric statement is greater in public language than formal language. In the latter, the relationship to authority is mediated by rationality as expressed linguistically while the former learns to obey or rebel.

A public language has a large number of idiomatic phrases from which the individual chooses. As a result, the public language user attaches feeling to the group which uses and understands this idiomatic usage. Language as explanation, is replaced by the speakers assertion of group solidarity. Language is not seen as a way for the child to express uniqueness; rather, a public language furthers the child's linguistic symbols which are social and not individual. Bernstein states:

> It is a form of social relationship where meaning is implicit...that maximizes identification with the aims and principles of a local group, rather than with the complex differentiated aims of the major society. This correspondingly minimizes the expression of differences and individual distinctiveness... (1961, p. 303).

While it is completely possible for a speaker of public language to create individualized speech, it is the system of shared meanings aspect of public speech which makes this sensitivity less likely or even inappropriate. Though characterized by warmth and vitality, public language is, in a sense, impersonal; impersonality allows for a form of social behavior that is controlled by an authoritarian and rigid social relationship where status, role, age, are guides to appropriate action and interaction.

This impersonality allows for two seemingly opposing types of responses: On the one hand, it creates loyalty to the group and a social relationship which is warm and vital (although dependent on a shared set of symbols to some extent demands passivity); on the other hand, impersonality protects the speaker or doer from responsibility, involvement and guilt.

Bernstein (1961) admits that a public language is not necessarily found in the complete form describe, only that an orientation to the form of language can be shown:

> It is necessary to state at this point that the type of 'public language' described and analyzed here will rarely be found in the pure state. Even if such an 'ideal' language use were to be spoken, it would not be used in all situations within the local group. Modifications 'within' the form would occur, most certainly, depending upon whether the situation is defined as social or personal. It is suggested that what is found empirically is an orientation to this form of language use, which is conditioned by socially induced preferences (p. 303).

Although some of the characteristics described may occur in most forms of language use, all relevant characteristics are found in a public language.

Heath's (1983) study of language in the three communities described in Ways with Words, a working class black community (Trackton), a working class white community (Roadville) and a middle class community made up of blacks and whites (The Townspeople) illustrates the "public" aspects of the public language form:

> By the age of twelve to fourteen months, boy babies have a special status. They are then accepted as players on Trackton's stage--the plaza in the midst of their community. It is here they begin their first explorations beyond the exclusively human environment in which they have developed during their first year. Most of the life of the community goes on outdoors, on the porches and in the plaza, and once boy babies are mobile and fairly steady on their feet, they are put on stage in this public area. Communication is the measure of involvement here. Young boys learn from an early age to handle their roles by getting their cues and lines straight and knowing the right occasions for joining the chorus. They learn to judge audience reaction and response to their performances and to adjust their behaviors in accordance with their need for audience participation and approval. "The measure of a man is his mouth," so males are prepared early by public language input and modeling for stage performances (my emphasis; p. 79).

Public language implies audience, stage, and sensitivity to the shared context between speakers and audience. According to Heath, in this early stage of language development, and in the verbal performances on stage in the local community, "the boys seem to focus on using a single utterance, always a well-

formed short sentence, with a variety of semantic values and contexts for interpretation. Thus they learn the variety of meanings a single utterance can have, as they elicit different interactional responses to the variations of intonation, tone, and voice quality they give these favorite expressions" (p. 81). Public and formal language refers one aspect of the social context of talk.

Reformulation: From Formal/Public Language to the Concept of Code

Based on the theoretical work on public and formal language, Bernstein applied to read for a higher degree in linguistics at the University College London. He was directed to the Department of Linguistics where he was interviewed by Dr. Freida Goldman-Eisler. Dr. Goldman-Eisler, a linguist, had written about the relationship between hesitation phenomena and types of verbal planning and encouraged Bernstein to continue his own research rather than read for a higher degree. Bernstein (1971) reports that at a subsequent meeting he was introduced to the Head of the Phonetics Department, Professor D. Fry, who offered to sponsor a grant application to the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. The application was successful and in January 1961, Bernstein was appointed honorary research assistant in the Department of Phonetics under the supervision of Dr. Goldman-Eisler (1971, p. 5).

Bernstein's research at the Department resulted in the publication of two papers ("Linguistic Codes, Hesitation Phenomena and Intelligence," and "Social Class, Linguistic Codes and Grammatical Elements.") Bernstein also lists his paper "A socio-linguistic approach to social learning" published in the Penguin Survey of the Social Sciences edited by J. Gould (1965) as reflecting the two years spent in the Department of Phonetics (Bernstein,

1971, p. 9).

In 1962, Bernstein submitted a research proposal to the Department of Education. Bernstein reports ongoing conversation with the Department to establish a focus for the proposal which became developing a language program for infant schoolchildren. And in spite of stated reservation that the theory was undeveloped, Bernstein accepted the grant. In January 1963, he was appointed Senior Lecturer in the Sociology of Education at the University of London Institute of Education and Head of the Sociological Research Unit. For almost three decades, Bernstein and his associates at the SRU produced an important, if little known body of research whose work appears in the series Primary Socialization, Language and Education, of which Bernstein is the general series editor.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Bernstein's work continued to be disseminated and he gave talks on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1963, he addressed the British Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1969, Bernstein presented the closing address at the British Sociological Associations' Annual Conference of the Sociology of Eduction. This speech, later published in Michael F.D. Young's Knowledge and Control, entitled "On the Classification and Framing of Educational Knowledge" is considered by some to be one of the seminal contributions in the sociology of education. In 1964, Bernstein came to the United States to present a paper at the Conference of Development of Cross-national Research on Education of Children and Adolescence, at the University of Chicago. Bernstein points out that the framework presented in that paper "Family role systems, communication and socialization" was adopted by Professors R. Hess and V. Shipman in their research on maternal teaching styles and communication. In any case, this may

be the first example of Bernstein's research being presented on the American side of the Atlantic. In 1976, Bernstein gave a public lecture to the Bank Street College's Fiftieth Anniversary Symposium held in New York and in 1969 Bernstein presented his paper "A critique of the Concept of Compensatory Education" at Teacher's College, Columbia University in New York.

In the early 1970s, Bernstein held a temporary position at the Ecole Pratique de Hautes Etudes, attached to the Centre de Sociologie Europeene, directed by Pierre Bourdieu. His work there resulted in the publication of "Class and Pedagogies: Visible and Invisible: which draws from the work of Bourdieu and makes the distinction between a property-owning middle class and a non-property owning segment of the middle class (old and 'new' middle class). Some of Bernstein's lectures and publications from the 1980s are presented in the recently published The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse, Volume IV of Class, Codes and Control (London: Routledge, 1990). This work contains an extension of Bernstein's research on sociolinguistic codes, and introduces the idea of a pedagogic code located in discourse.

Code Theory

Code draws attention to the relationship between the power structure of society and the ways individuals experience that structure through transmission (what is received), acquisition (how receptive a person is to the message) and distribution (who gets what) (Bernstein, 1990, p. 119).

Code is meant to allow us to understand how the outer world, the social world, reaches and then penetrates our inner world of thoughts, experiences, motives, evaluations and other aspects of individual thinking. Bernstein (1990) explains:

> Thus a code is a regulative principle, tacitly acquired, which selects and integrates relevant

> meanings, forms of realizations, and evoking contexts. . . Code is a regulator of the relationships between contexts and, through that relationship, a regulator of relationships within contexts (emphasis in original, p. 101).

The concept of code is intended as a way of getting beyond a listing of attributes of language in the hope of finding a defining principle or underlying regulative principle (Bernstein, 1971). Bernstein (1990) suggests that the past thirty years of his career has been taken up almost wholly with the specification, development and regulation of the concept of code, with the newest volume, The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse (Volume IV: Class, Codes and Control) focusing on elaborated code and its several modalities. Bernstein tells us that the "concept of code is not simply a regulator of cognitive orientation but regulates dispositions, identities, and practices, as these are formed in official and local pedagogizing agencies (school and family)" (1990, p. 3).

What is a Sociolinguistic Code?

According to Bernstein (1962a), a sociolinguistic code is a defining principle. Code regulates orientation of the speaker, of how incoming messages are scanned, verbally and non-verbally; of associations, how messages are placed in line with other signals in the signal store and possible responses are located; and organization, how signals are integrated and organized to produce a response. Code is used to imply the principles which regulate these three processes, which originate in the form of social relationship or more generally, the quality of the social structure:

> The form of the social relationship acts selectively on the type of code which then becomes a symbolic expression of the relationship and proceeds to regulate the nature of interaction (1962a, p.36)

Bernstein's search has been to define the sociological conditions necessary for the emergence of specific codes, how these codes are realized in everyday talk, and how their realization is connected to social class, and socialization at home and in school.

Another feature of code as described by Bernstein is that in the process of acquisition to specific codes, principles of order are taken over but at the same time tacit principles of the disordering of that order" (p. 3). Access to change, or the possibility of change (or lack thereof), is an essential ingredient of an understanding of meaning of code. This notion is a key tension to the later application of Bernstein's theory of language to understanding student performances.

Sociolinguistic Code as Genetic Code. Atkinson (1985) points to Bernstein's use of a "genetic code" analogy in explaining the meaning of code:

> I am suggesting that if we look into the work relationships of this particular group, its community relationships, its family role systems, it is reasonable to argue that the genes of social class may well be carried through a communication code that social class itself promotes (Bernstein, 1971 as quoted in Atkinson, 1985, p. 61).

Atkinson suggests that it is no accident that Bernstein should use a biological metaphor in that both the biological genetic code and a cultural communication code are formally equivalent in that they are both seen as mechanisms for intergenerational transmission in which structural properties of similarity and difference are systematically reproduced. Reproduction is thereby managed by a small set of elements or principles which in turn govern permitted combinations and permutations (Atkinson, 1985, p. 61).

Code as a Code of Conduct? But in another sense, Bernstein's "code" may be closer to a "code of conduct or code of ethics," the rules, principles, regulations which govern our interactions with others, and be suggestive of how much (or little) freedom we have to negotiate these individual interactions. Code, in this sense, puts us into to the real world of how people act, confront the actions of others, define action and participation or lack thereof. In this sense, code may give us access to the "inner" dialogues and rationales, that may remain hidden, when looking only at people in action, in the world.

Code and Habitus. Bernstein suggests that code is also related to Bourdieu's concept of habitus, a cultural grammar specialized by class position and fields of practice, (1990, p. 3). Bernstein sees the project of constructing the rules of these grammars and the forms of their transmission and acquisition, more closely related his work than that of Bourdieu. "Code may be regarded as an attempt to write what may perhaps be called pedagogic grammars of specialized habituses and the forms of their transmission which attempt to regulate their acquisition" (Bernstein, 1990, p. 3).

Elaborated and Restricted Codes

The largest debate over Bernstein's work has to do with the definition and meaning behind his research on elaborated and restricted codes. In the early 1960s, there is a change in Bernstein's writing, away from discussion of public and formal language to that of sociolinguistic codes. The change is not merely one of finer specification of terminology. Rather, it is an attempt to shift the level of analysis-- away from what people say, to the rules which govern how it is that they come to speak in specific ways. In the search for underlying characteristics of the social order and social

relationships which shape the speech act, Bernstein begins to identify and analyze speech codes. This attempt to make the shift in level of abstraction more explicit occurs during the two years Bernstein stayed at the Department of Phonetics and the papers written during this period.

Bernstein (1962a; 1962b) introduces the concept of two general codes of language use, a 'restricted speech code' and an 'elaborated speech code.' He proposes that when a child speaks, he voluntarily produces changes in his field of stimuli. Subsequent behavior is modified by the nature of these changes. The forms of spoken language, in the process of their learning, introduce, widen and reinforce specific relationships with the environment creating a particular level of significance. Bernstein's task: to understand the ways in which social structure, speech and individual behavior relate.

To get at these relationships, Bernstein begins by discussing the sociological conditions necessary for the emergence of a restricted or an elaborated code:

> The form of the social relationship acts selectively on the type of code which then becomes a symbolic expression of the relationship and proceeds to regulate the nature of interaction (1962a, p. 36).

Bernstein (1971) continues to define the principles outlined by the speech codes, their social class origins, their relationship to family role systems, social control and educability.

> A restricted code will arise where the form of social relations is based upon closely shared identifications, upon an extensive range of shared expectations, upon a range of shared assumptions. Thus a restricted code emerges where the culture or subculture raises the 'we' above the 'I' (p. 146).

On the other hand, the social relations which result in an elaborated code emphasize the individual over the communal, the 'I' takes precedence over the

'we':

> An elaborated code will arise wherever the culture or subculture emphasizes the 'I' over the 'we'. It will arise wherever the intent of the other person cannot be taken for granted, then speakers are forced to elaborate their meanings and make them both explicit and specific. Meanings which are discreet and local to the speaker must be cut so that they are intelligible to the listener, and this pressure forces upon the speaker to select both among syntactic alternatives and encourages differentiation of vocabulary (1971, p. 147).

The shift in focus and level of abstraction is a key aspect of understanding Bernstein's theory of language and code.

An Example of Criticism which Misses this Shift.

A criticism of Bernstein which misses this shift comes in a comment from a 1977 book (recently reprinted) by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977):

> The description of the opposition between bourgeois language and w-c language could be taken farther with the aide of the remarkable analyses of Basil Bernstein and his school devoted to the differences between 'formal language' of the 'middle class' and the 'public language' of the 'working class.' However, in failing to formulate the implicit assumptions of the theoretical tradition to which his analyses belong (Sapir-Whorf/Anthropology or Kant-Cassier-Humboldt/Philosophy) Bernstein tends to reduce to intrinsic characteristics of the language ... differences whose unifying, generative principle lies in the different types of relation to language, themselves embedded in different systems of attitudes towards the world and other people. Though the modus operandi can be grasped...in the opus operatum the productive habitus must not be reduced to its product (1977, pp. 133-134).

This comment seems to suggest that Bernstein's analysis of language risks mistaking the ways people speak with the underlying properties which shape what is said, and are in shaped by the language. The movement to codes is interpreted as anticipation of just such criticism.

Code and Family Structure

In addition to social class, family structure mediates language code. Bernstein connects the organization and rule discretion possibilities in society with those in the family. Bernstein (1971) explains:

> The greater the reduction in the range of alternatives, the more communal or collective the verbal meanings and the lower the order of complexity and more rigid the syntactic and vocabulary selections -- thus the more restricted the code. On the other hand, we would call a role system which permitted a range of alternatives for the realization of verbal meanings an open type. It should follow that the greater the range of alternatives permitted by the role system, the more individualized the verbal meanings, the higher the order and the more flexible the syntactic and vocabulary selection and so the more elaborated the code (1971, p. 148).

When the family role system is closed, meaning are likely to be assigned to the role of obligation. Members of an open role system are seen as having greater possibility to create new meanings by exploring and extending their roles. Thus, according to Bernstein, language codes are connected to social class and family role system.

This is not to suggest that these orderings are fixed. In fact, Cook-Gumperz (1973), a colleague of Bernstein, argues that the role structure of the family reflects what parents take to be the ascriptive ordering of the larger society (p. 14). Thus the structure of family life and communication may reflect the expectations of and for middle class and working class families to show and open or closed family role system.

Positional and Personal family role systems. Based on the degree of role flexibility, role discretion and the strength of boundary maintenance, Bernstein distinguishes two family systems: 'positional' and 'personal' (1971, pp.152-166; pp. 184-186). Positional families are characterized by

strong boundaries among status of members based on and as a function of age, sex, age relations. The child takes over a position and responds to a formal pattern of obligation and privilege. Personal or person-centered families are illustrated by weak boundaries and differentiation of members based on unique characteristics of each member. Relations are described as ego-centric and members make their role instead of stepping into predefined patterns. While positional families are concerned with the general characteristics of members, person-centered families are more sensitive to the particular aspects of family members. Within these family contexts linguistic codes are developed and extended.

Family Role System and Code Access. Positional families have clear separation of roles which are formally defined areas of decision making. Judgments are made according to formal status. Positional families use a more 'closed' communication system. Socialization is more likely to be one directional, from parent to child. Intention is not verbally explored and the child is less likely to be able to deal with role ambiguity. In the person-centered family, unique capabilities and talents are more important determinants of what decisions are made and the basis for them. Status ascription based on formal relations (sex, age, age relation) is reduced in this family type. The child's socialization is two directional, from parent to child and back again. Motive is important and can be verbally explored.

Regarding communications styles, Bernstein suggests that in positional families, speech is relevant but symbolizes formal boundaries that are already established. the child attains a strong sense of social identity at the cost of autonomy. In person-centered families, inner thoughts of members are made public through communication. Speech is the major mechanism of control and he

child attains a stronger sense of autonomy at the cost of a weaker social identity.

Positional families are associated with closed communication styles, restricted code; person-oriented families are associated with open communication, elaborated code. Since the degree of role discretion is limited in positional families, the communication style is less likely to encourage the verbal elaboration of individual differences and is less likely to lead to the verbal elaboration of judgments and their basis and consequences. This also precludes the possibility of exploring individual intentions and motives verbally. In person-oriented families, where there is less role segregation, and role discretion is more broadly defined, there is greater need for communication which clarifies and makes explicit meanings, intentions and motives. Based on the open communication pattern of person-centered families, Bernstein hypothesizes a situation where children socialize parents as much as parents socialize children.

Positional and personal families entail different communication modes. Parental modes of behavior, particularly social control, also entail different principles for each family type. Bernstein distinguishes three modes of control based on the range of alternatives given the child: (1) imperative mode; (2) positional mode; and (3) personal mode. The imperative mode allows for the narrowest range of alternatives. Here, the child is permitted to obey or must rebel. Options are communicated through a restricted linguistic code with statements such as: "Don't do that! Shut up! Go to your room!" The two other modes are characterized by greater ranges of response. They differ, however, on the basis used for requesting the child's compliance. The positional mode of control refers the behavior of the child to a specific norm

inherent in a social status,. For example, "Boys don't cry" invokes the sex status norm or "You are too young to stay out late" invokes the age status norm. The basis of positional appeal lies with the fact that the child is explicitly linked to a social category, and the rule applicable to the social category applicable to the child.

Summary

The first section of the paper explains Bernstein's sociology of language by defining terms from Bernstein's papers and seeing the relationship between his research, biography and professional responsibility. Code is defined as an underlying regulating principle which recognizes how the outer world becomes part of the inner and the social reality. Ways of thinking about code, as genetic, as social, as cultural, are examined. The section concludes with discussion of the relationship between family structure and code.

The second part of the paper looks at applications of Bernstein's sociology of language as an explanation of student performances in school. Three perspectives are explored: deficit, difference and bewitchment. A critical reading suggests that while all three point to intellectual resources provided by Bernstein, one, the bewitchment perspective, best captures the application of Bernstein's research.

Bernstein and the Deficit Hypothesis

Bernstein's work has been criticized as portraying working class children in a negative fashion. Further, that Bernstein's discussion of elaborated and restricted codes, to the extent that they focus on the

limitations of working class speech, is an example of a cultural deficit model. This paper argues that an interpretation of Bernstein's work as support for an explanation of cultural deprivation is incorrect. In order to explain why, we begin by giving examples which identify Bernstein as a cultural deficit theorist. This is followed by a brief explanation of what is implied by the term "cultural deficit" and why Bernstein's work does not fit the model.

Examples Which Explain Bernstein as a Deficit Theorist

Differences in interpretation of Bernstein's work are illustrated by looking at how texts in the sociology of education, past and present, cite, explain and interpret his work. Consider the example found in Kathleen Bennett's and Margaret LeCompte's new textbook (1990) How Schools Work: A Sociological Analysis of Education (New York: Longman). In a chapter on equality of educational opportunity for ethnic minorities, subsection on theories of cultural background: cultural deprivation, Bernstein's research is connected to the theory of "cultural deprivation."

> Children thought to be culturally deprived were described by policymakers and educators as those who lived in ghetto neighborhoods where they were not provided with proper nutrition and did not have adequate health care...The homes in which these children grew up did not provide them with the tools they needed to succeed in school. It was believed that parents in these environments did not read to their children; did not encourage the kinds of learning activities at home that were used by middle class parents and generally did not provide an intellectually stimulating home environment. Minority children often came to school with a home language or dialect that was not middle class or standard English (Berstein (sic) 1977) (1990, pp. 213-214).

The citation links Bernstein with research that explains minority student failure in school on the basis of "disadvantages, deficiencies or deficits"

that the child brings from home to school.

Sarane Boocock is a leading scholar in the sociology of education. Her 1980 textbook Sociology of Education: An Introduction (2nd edition, 1980) spends approximately one and one half paragraphs talking about Bernstein and ends on the following note:

> Bernstein's work has been attacked by critics who accuse him of perpetuating an unjustified image of lower-class background as "defective"" and in itself responsible for academic failure, though Bernstein himself argues that there is nothing intrinsic in working-class linguistic development as such that prevents a child from learning the universalistic codes prevalent in school. His conclusions have also been called into question by studies on children's linguistic development conduct by Doris Entwisle, which have shown that disadvantaged children actually may begin school with greater linguistic sophistication than their more advantaged peers (1980, p. 45).

The next two and one-half pages of the Boocock text discusses Entwisle's research, given seemingly as a refutation of Bernstein. With the exception of two additional sentences also linking Bernstein with holding a "culture of poverty" (cultural deficit) view, nothing else about Bernstein's work is cited or discussed.

What is the Cultural and Linguistic Deficit Hypothesis?

If language is an important avenue of socialization and one's socialization is at least partly responsible for educational achievement, then the language a child brings to school may help explain the child's pattern of achievement in school. Hurn (1978) explains that the cultural deprivation hypothesis accepts the proposition that there are significant differences in 'intelligence" between classes and races, and that the differences are environmental rather than genetic. Baratz (1969) explains the position

without agreeing with it:

> Such children have systematic but underdeveloped language behavior and therefore, their, their underdeveloped system leads to cognitive deficits (1969, p. 890)

The deficit view locates the problem of educability and educational attainment with the culture and language that children bring to school. Hurn (1978) suggests that such arguments were not only plausible, but had great appeal to the liberal reform movement of the 1960s because they dramatized the "great disparities between the environments of rich and poor children and aroused public indignation over conditions in the city ghettos" (p. 134-135). Citing work of Stodolsky and Lesser and others, Hurn argues that the cultural deficit model, which links school performance and home environment, and assumes impoverished environments lead to the development of intelligence with presumed inadequacies of verbal interaction, is inadequate and over simplistic in its conception of intelligence and environment. Further, Hurn argues that view that linguistic ability determines student achievement is also questionable, in that it fails to explain why some children with highly developed verbal skills often perform poorly in school. Here, Hurn begins to shift focus away from children and families towards the curriculum and how particular curricula and teaching styles interact with the intellectual strengths and weakness of students from different social origins.

Educational Disadvantage in the 1990s. Natriello, McDill and Pallas (1990) use the term "educationally disadvantaged" to explain the audience for additional school services and the targeting of resources. They argue that since education refers to processes inside and outside of school, that educational experiences come not only from formal schooling but also from the

family and the community.

> While the first awareness of the consequences of such experiences may surface in schools, where student performance is formally assessed, the source of the problem may rest with the school and/or with the family and the community in which the student is reared (1990, p. 13).

The conditions of family life, schools and communities which place children at educational disadvantage are then listed as race and ethnicity, poverty, single-parent families, poorly educated mothers and limited English proficiency.

Why Bernstein's Theory is not a Deficit Approach

Bernstein's explanation does not attempt to separate the formal properties of language and their meanings realized in usage. While his research includes formal and informal rules which regulate options taken in different contexts, Bernstein argues against the view that the linguistic shapes the cultural system because this misses the way the two interact. Bernstein says that language (as explained by the formal properties of grammar) is capable of generating any number of codes and there is no reason to believe that any one is better than another.

Although speech may initially be a function of a given social arrangement, the speech form may in turn, modify or even change that social structure which initially evolved that speech form. Under what circumstances is this possible? Bernstein's answer is to focus attention on boundary maintenance procedures of a given culture or subculture. In this way a link is established between forms of boundary maintenance at the cultural level and forms of speech at the interactional level.

Bernstein and Labov. Perhaps the most cited example which links Bernstein's theory to cultural deficit is found in the criticism and interpretation by Labov (1970):

> The most extreme view which proceeds from this orientation--and one that is now being widely accepted--is that lower class Negro children have no language at all. The notion is first drawn from Basil Bernstein's writings that "much of lower-class language consists of a kind of incidental 'emotional' accompaniment to action here and now" (Jensen, 1968, P. 118). Bernstein's views are filtered through a strong bias against all forms of working-class behavior, so that middle-class language is seen as superior in every respect--as "more abstract, and necessarily somewhat more flexible, detailed and subtle" (p. 119). One can proceed through a range of such views until he comes to the preschool programs of Bereiter and Engelmann (1970, p. 156).

Atkinson's (1985) chapter on "Bernstein and the linguists" explains this interpretation as incorrect and attributes the misinterpretation to Labov's focus on Bernstein's early papers only, attribution to secondary sources, such as Jensen, and Labov's own fundamental disagreement with the deficit theory. Atkinson says "regrettably Labov has continued to misrepresent Bernstein as a deficit theorist, bracketed with Bereiter and Engelmann, even in his most recent publications [Labov, 1982]" (1985, p. 104).

Examples of Bernstein Arguing Against the Deficit Model

The view presented here is much closer to the view Bernstein takes in his article "A Critique of the Concept of Compensatory Education" (Bernstein, 1971) in which he takes exception to the concept of compensatory education because it implies that something is lacking in the family, and so in the child. Bernstein says

> "If children are labelled 'culturally deprived' then it follows that the parents are inadequate, the spontaneous realizations of their culture, its images and symbolic representations are of reduced value and

> significance. Teachers will have lower expectations of the children, which the children will undoubtedly fulfil" (1971, p. 192).

This suggests a very different view than those identifying Bernstein as a "deficit" theorist or linking his research to other deficit theorists, made in the citations from Labov (1970), Boocock (1980) and Bennett and LeCompte (1990).

Bernstein (1974) cites his prior writing to argue against the conclusion that his work can simply be understood to support a theory of cultural deficit (see the postscript to the revised edition of Class, Codes and Control volume I, 1973 and also presented as "A brief account of the theory of codes" Open University course, Language and Learning, Block 3, Milton Keynes, The Open University). In writing about public language, Bernstein states:

> A public language contains its own aesthetic, a simplicity and directness of expression, emotionally virile, pithy and powerful and a metaphoric range of considerable force and appropriateness. Some examples taken from the schools of this country have a beauty which many writers might well envy (Bernstein, 1959).

This argues against cultural deficit. Or Bernstein (1964) talking about code proposes:

> Clearly, one code is not better than another, each possesses its own aesthetic, its own possibilities (Bernstein, 1964).

Still later, Bernstein writes about incorrect interpretations of restricted code:

> I must emphasize the point that in restricted code relationships, people are not non-verbal. There is no such thing as a non-verbal child; if a child is limited to a restricted code, it means not that this child is non-verbal, but simply that the kinds of roles he has learned have created in him a particular way in which he verbally transforms his world. It is a whole lot of nonsense to speak of a non-verbal child, although he may be inarticulate in certain

> social contexts [emphasis in original] (Bernstein, 1966a).

In the question and answer session following a public lecture at the Bank Street College (New York), Bernstein (1966b) responds to Mario Fantini's questions about how to apply his model by cautioning against applying a deficit model of language and learner and associating his work with a more general model of the relationships, structure and function of socializing agencies.

> Mario Fantini: I would like to raise a broad question. Most of us in the United States seem to have linked your theory to the problems associated with the socially disadvantaged. I would like to offer you an opportunity to get the record straight in terms of its application. . .
>
> Basil Bernstein: . . . It follows from my view that the notion of deficit is inadequate and perhaps misleading. Deficit is not a theory; it is simply a statement of certain lacks or deficiencies. This notion of treating children as exhibiting various kinds of deficits turns the social scientist into a plumber whose task is to plug, or rather fill, the deficits. It may lead to a partial relation with the child. You see a child as a cognitive or perceptual deficit, and so lose track of the vital nature of the communal experience of the child and the many cultural and psychological processes at work in him, when he is to be "enriched."
>
> It is of critical importance to draw into our work researchers in sociology and anthropology, in order that the various socializing agencies can be seen in relation to each other, and that the dynamics which flows from the political and economic nature of the society can inform our thinking and our actions. We must have more work of a sociological nature on both the school and the college of education as sociocultural systems (1966b, pp. 41-42).

Bernstein's response to Fantini is interpreted as a critique of the cultural deprivation approach which understands language of children as deficit systems. The explanations within Bernstein's sociology of language are at a

different level of abstraction and of broader sociological importance to understanding the ways in which humans interact with their environments, shape their worlds and are in turn shaped by the world around them. The originality of Bernstein's work is not so much in the descriptions of the relationships between class and speech; it is in the analyses of the ways the social structure (and pattern of class inequalities) generate distinct forms of communication. Speech is understood to be generated by the social structure and in turn acts to set up certain relationships or rules governing behavior.

Bernstein and the Cultural Differences Model

The argument so far is that Bernstein's work does not support and even attacks the theory of cultural deficit. Karabel and Halsey (1977) also take this position in their interpretation of the importance of Bernstein's research:

> Thus Bernstein is in the in the anomalous position of attacking the theory of cultural deficit while at the same time providing meticulous descriptions of the ways in which the working-class sub-culture militates against the academic achievement of children who originate it (pp. 66-67).

Karabel and Halsey's interpretation sees Bernstein's work as focusing the reader's attention to the processes within schools which contribute to the success and failure of children who come to school from "different" social class and linguistic backgrounds.

Hurn (1978) examines criticism of the cultural deficit hypothesis and cites Charles Valentine and Stephen and Joan Baratz claim that cultural deficit model is based on a "social pathology" model which implies an

ethnocentric or even racist conception of the black community. Hurn quotes the Baratz's article:

> Speaking standard English is a linguistic disadvantage for the black youth on the streets of Harlem. A disadvantage created by a difference is not the same thing as a deficit (Baratz and Baratz, cited in Hurn, 1978, p. 135).

Hurn suggests that the cultural differences argument focuses attention on the limitations of the assessment instruments themselves and not on the environment that poor and minority children bring to school. Differences become deficits only in how these differences are perceived and treated by the schools. Hurn concludes that the source of unequal performances may lie in the "interaction between particular features of the child's environment and the roles that students play in school" (p. 181).

Erickson (1986) examines the differences hypothesis in explaining why some students fail in school. Different emphases at home and in school regarding competition, ways of expressing agression and humor, in expectations for school and classroom, and in the meaning of testing itself are seen as explanatory factors.

Matching the Culture of the Family with the Culture of School

Heath (1983) argues for recognizing cultural differences in socialization and talk that children bring to school. Armed with such information, teachers are then able to construct a more vital and relevant school environment. When some children come to school, they find discontinuity between the value given to speech performances at home, and what is expected of them at school.

> Thus their [Trackton children] entry into a classroom which depends on responses based on lifting items and events out of context is a shock. Their abilities to contextualize, to remember what may seem to the

> teacher to be an unrelated event as similar to another, to link seemingly disparate factors in their explanations, and to create highly imaginative stories are suppressed in the classroom. The school's approach to reading and learning establishes decontextualized skills as foundational in the hierarchy of academic skills (p. 353).

Without recognition of this discontinuity, teachers are unable to understand, let alone value, the performances of their students.

Consequences of Cultural Differences: Differential Treatment

Cazden (1986) points out that the cultural differences argument implies that students come to school with different prior experiences, and as a result, experience schooling differently. Does one ignore prior background information about children and risk alienating children by ignoring contexts of learning or does one recognize cultural differences children bring to school and risk stereotyping, labelling or differential expectations? The dilemma for Cazden is stated as follows:

> Because of prior experiences in their home community, students would be better served if teachers took differences into account more than they now do; and teachers now differentiate among their students in ways that may continue, even increase, inequalities of information and skills present when students start school (1986, p. 445).

Knowledge about cultural differences may be helpful to teachers in structuring programs and curricula; it may also lead to greater stereotyping and labeling. The crux of the issue is not in the child's performance in school, but in how the performances are understood and valued in school.

Tracking. In her book Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality (1985), Jeannie Oakes looks at one aspect of the educational environment, tracking, in order to understand how it leads unequal educational experiences for students. Citing Bernstein, she claims:

> In Bernstein's view, schools become differentiated as they attempt to fulfill the needs of society by imparting specific knowledge and skills to students...It is likely that in a differentiated (tracked) school, a lower-class student with initial low involvement, placed in a homogeneous group, will be come increasingly uninvolved and alienated from the school. This results, according to Bernstein, because the nature of the particular teacher-pupil authority relationships and an emphasis on reward and punishments lead to a greater or lessor achievement depending on the student's placement (pp. 200-201).

The implication is that Bernstein's work documents the ways schooling may be experienced differently by students from different social class and linguistic backgrounds, to the disadvantage of poor and minority students.

We are left with the position that cultural differences explains school failure not because children are broken, but because of miscommunication or mismatch between the language and culture children bring to school and the basis by which the school understands, measures and rewards students. However, cultural and language differences that are unrecognized or misrepresented at best or penalized at worst, are tantamount to a deficit.

Bernstein and the Bewitchment of Language

Bernstein's research is important because it allows us to see the ways in which language contributes to our defining and interpreting what goes on around us. The ways children enter the world, become part of the family and community, arrive and are perceived at school, are in part shaped by language. Language used may be seen as situationally specific and judged to be lacking (the deficit view); alternatively the language and community assumptions may not match expectations of the schools, and while not seen as lacking, provide the opportunity to explain, blame, or excuse student

performances (the difference perspective).

The third perspective, that of Bernstein and the bewitchment of language, points to the potential of language to hide things from view or to reveal them; to lose or gain resources when thinking about self and society; to maintain the status quo or recognize possibilities of the future.

Bernstein's research in the sociology of language gives an access route, for how the outside world reaches inside: through the taken for granted signs, catagories, codes and labels. It also points the way to change, by recognizing what "is" at a given point in time, and what is within our reach to understand, and ultimately keep, disgard or change.

Do Others Recognize this Possibility in Bernstein's Views?

Bernstein's research on language recognizes the importance of language: as a shaper of what thought and felt (the messages received) and as a medium of expression (messages produced). Atkinson (1985) focuses attention on this aspect of Bernstein's research:

> ...He (Bernstein) addresses too how language use is itself constitutive of social structure, and of social selves, roles or identities... (Bernstein) is exploring different principles in the social construction of reality...(and) intent on locating different principles of reality-construction within the division of labour of a modern, differentiated society (pp. 57-58).

At least implicitly, Bernstein's research on language (and code) has always been a part of understanding reality construction, the key tension of which is the ability of the listener to move beyond the words, to gain access to self and situation.

Greene (1973) also recognizes the power of language to shape how we experience the world and at the same time she points to the possibilities of

language to "building or shaping" of the world, with reference to Bernstein's language codes. Greene suggests that the "phenomenologist, more than most other philosophers, may have an answer when he affirms that every human being has the capacity to look critically at his world if he is freed to do so through dialogue. Equipped with the necessary skills, he can deal critically with his reality, once he has become conscious of how he perceives it" (p. 167). Greene goes on to cite Bernstein's view of how the civil rights movement in the United States brought about changes in linguistic codes, a process she says resembles Friere's "conscientization."

> The language of social protest, with its challenging of assumptions, its grasping towards new cultural forms, may play an important role in breaking down the limitations of sub-culturally bound restricted codes (Bernstein, 1971, quoted in Greene, 1973, pp. 167-168).

The importance of language to self-awareness and social awareness, to gaining perspective on one's life and the social order, then can be reached from Bernstein's descriptions and understanding of language.

Language, Self and Society. Bernstein (1971, pp. 119-121) points to the work of Mead (1934) in the thinking about the relationship between language and code on the one hand and voluntary participation in society on the other. According to Cook (1973)

> the child becomes aware of others' expectations of him and of others; responses to his acts. From these experiences he develops a sense of the requirements of the 'society,' a 'generalized other' which the child can use to 'guide' and effectively control his own and others' behavior (1973, p. 309).

While Bernstein suggests that Mead's "generalized other" is not subjected to systematic enquiry (which is a foundation for Bernstein's research), Mead's

"I" points to the voluntary nature of man's participation in affairs and the creativity of man made possible by speech. Cook suggests why Bernstein's explanation is important:

> Therein lies the importance of Bernstein's theory of parent's explanations and the different modes of social control. Thus, in acquiring the ways of talk of his social group, the child is acquiring, "for all practical purposes", a way of producing and recognizing "perceivedly normal" or routine behavior in himself and others. Through learning to talk and negotiate social inter-action with others the child is learning to apply and to follow rules as a "situated accomplishment" (1973, p. 332).

The nature of language as access to self, and how one gains such access, is a major tension in Bernstein's writing and has application for understanding student performances in school and how they are valued.

The "Coercive" Effect of Language

Berger and Luckmann (1966) point to the relationship of language to thought and culture. Their view is that language is central to the construction of social reality. It is through language that the definitions which we daily take for granted are made meaningful. Social meanings are recreated in common-place interactions of people as they go about their lives.

> Language...is the most important sign system of human society... The common objectivations of everyday life are maintained, primarily by linguistic signification. Everyday life, is above all, life with and by means of the language I share with my fellowmen. An understanding of language is thus essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life.
>
> Language has the quality of objectivity. I encounter language as a facticity external to myself and it is coercive [my emphasis] in its effect upon me. Language forces me into its patterns.
>
> Language builds up semantic fields or zones of meaning that are linguistically circumscribed... Language builds up classification schemes to differentiate objects by 'gender' ... or by number; modes of

> indicating degree of social intimacy, and so on... My interaction with others in everyday life is, therefore, constantly affected by our common participation in the available social stock of knowledge (1966, pp. 49-51).

Social relations are possible through shared assumptions as communicated through language. These shared assumptions in turn affect the way in which social relations exist and the resulting talk built upon these assumptions. Language shapes and is shaped by the structure of social relations. The focus on the "coercive" nature of language in looking at how knowledge is constructed through social interactions of individuals seems of key importance. Berger and Luckmann force us to look at the power of language through its constructions and classifications.

The Spell of Classifications

Classifications illustrate how language is used to create meanings which shape how people are perceived and recognized by themselves and others. Take the following example from a speech pathology text and the brief clinical portraits of a client:

> Custodial or profound mental retardation (I.Q. below 20). Psychologists found it impossible to measure Max Neilson's intelligence, but it is their clinical judgment that he is severely retarded. Born out of wedlock, he was a victim of cogenital syphilis... (Van Riper and Emerick, 1990, p. 132).

Max's potential comes after we are told he was born out of wedlock. The explanation for his disability seems unrelated to such information but it is included, and shapes our view of Max, and of the party "responsible" for his status. The label damages and the language diminishes Max and his potential. The "self-fulfilling prophecy" predicts how Max will be recognized in the future.

Breaking the Spell of Labels. Contrast the above with the following letter written from the mother of a multiply handicapped child, similar in ability to "Max", but which breaks the spell of labels and instead sees the humanity of the child first, not how she is deficient or different. The language used to describe her does not place value judgments on her but asks us to suspend judgment; it also illustrates the consequences of labels as seen through the eyes of a parent:

> Dear Professor: I am writing you this letter because I did not want to waste valuable classtime discussing the philospohical issues of raising a handicapped child. I want to express my feelings to you because you have such a powerful influence on future teachers and speech pathologists.
>
> To teach professionals to use words such as retarded and labels like severe and profound sets them up for an adversarial, unpleasant and oftentimes unfortunate experience when communicating with parents of a handicapped child.
>
> In the culture that I now belong to (the parents of severely handicapped children) words like retarded or severe or profound have a tremendously hurtful impact. We have the same feelings as if you had called my child "nigger," "kike." "beaner," etc. It is not a denial of my child's disability but rather an adoption of a new culture which validates my child's life by accepting and treating my child as a functional productive important part of that society with capabilities and milestones to pass just as any other human in my culture. My daughter is not measured against any other person in my culture. She stands on her own merit. For her physical, sensory capabilities and the physiological structure and composition of her brain, in my culture she is doing magnificently. She teaches all of society and should be on the honor roll.
>
> In your culture she is seen as a tragedy of nature without any function or use for the society. She is labeled and hidden away from the rest of society in isolated and self-contained classrooms or institutions. She has no value or significant worth. Her label tells you that. Your culture justifies labels by saying this is the only way to get services. In my daughter's case, her label "severe" only serves to hurt her parents feelings and justifies not giving her services, because she is not ready to learn or she

is too needy and would deplete funds which could be used more wisely on children thought to be more functional and therefore worth more.

In my culture all children are capable of learning something maybe just to blink an eye or raise a finger. In my culture the children do not learn by Piagetian stages. Some walk and never crawl. To wait to teach the child to walk until she has crawled is to deny the child from walking. We have a society of idiosyncratic learners where creativity, ingenuity and flexibility are extolled. The children in my culture all have equal value.

Wouldn't it be better just to label her needy of special services, to be determined by the evaluation team. This doesn't make me feel bad. This doesn't make me feel like my child's life is valueless. Severe, like when you drive over those metal protrusions in the parking lot and the sign says **"Warning: Don't back up or you will get severe tire damage."** That tire will be ruined, non-functional, valueless. You will have to throw that tire away. By saying in need of special services to be determined by her evaluation team, I feel good, as if the team may actually help her. No value judgment has been placed on her life.

I understand your culture because I used to be part of it. But try to understand my culture. From now on everytime you say the word retarded, when you are standing in front of a classroom of people, imagine that you have just described a child as a "nigger," "kike," or "beaner" and you look up and there in the back of the class is a little old lady, her mother, that you have just violated.

I learned in your class tonight that language is a very powerful tool and can be expressed in many different ways with different meanings for different cultures. It truly does. Your culture's language to define mine are truely offensive and painful to us. We hear your definition and they hurt so badly we often go home and cry. It would be great if we could respect each others culture and use language that would be acceptable to both societies.

Thanks for stimulating my thoughts. I promise not to cause a scene or even raise my hand when you mention labels in class; but just remember: there is a little old lady in the back of the class who has feelings. Sincerely, A Student.

The letter tells of the power of words, to shape situations, to shape how people are perceived and responded to. The label predicts what will happen

next, isolation and instituionalization. The need is to construct a more positive world; otherwise survival, for parent and child is threatened.

Recognizing the "Collusion" Spell. McDermott (1974) points to a "collusion stand" in which children are not learning in school not so much because they are broken (deficit) or different, but because they are made to appear that way. McDermott argues that competition is endemic to our society and that the search for inherent skills effectively organizes the school day and its children around the issue of successful and unsuccessful competence displays. In McDermott's words:

> Learning is not a possession; rather it is a change in the relation between an organism and (hopefully) specifiable conditions... As such, the focus of school management and research must be the conditions of the system that make learning possible, and not on specific learners (p. 157).

Competence for McDermott, is not the characteristic of individuals, but rather the property of situations. And situations are organized so that some kinds of displays and talents take on more significance than others. McDermott suggests the epistemology of such a view is that categories necessary for an adequate description of the organization of social life are fundamentally well hidden. And "collusion--the hopes, guesses and even lies about what is happening now and what will happen next-- is required of any persons trying to do something together" (p. 157). Just as we have to push ourselves to false heights just to maintain the world as it was yesterday, why not go all the way and work for a better one.

What McDermott gives us is a view of the school and classroom, in which we teach competition, in which students and teachers conspire to provide success and failure dramas. McDermott's hidden curriculum of "competition" is

accomplished through language and labels, enacted in the daily performances and evaluations of students. The hoped for alternative is schooling as the search for new meanings, and of how prior meanings need to be rethought in light of new evidence and understanding.

Unearthing the Seeds of Dilemmas. Bernstein's sociology of language allows him to inspect the construction of school reality, which begins before students and teachers arrive on the scene. What happens in schools, through pedagogy, curriculum and evaluation, is the line of research presented in Bernstein's theory of educational transmissions, and while it has not been the focus of this paper, it is an essential part of his sociology of education. One of the central aspects of Bernstein theory of language has to do with the ways people gain access to their own inner thoughts, and how these thoughts and actions are understood and shaped by the outside world.

Others have used the analyses of dilemma to understand how this process works. Billig et al. (1988) refer to the "the dilemmatic aspects of thinking" which are preconditions to actual choice making behavior. Berlak and Berlak (1981) point to sixteen dilemmas intended to serve as a "language of inquiry for describing schooling and exploring systematically the origins and consequences of the schooling process upon children, and its contribution to social and cultural reproduction and change (p. 135). One of the curriculum dilemmas is the "personal knowledge v. public knowledge" dilemma. On the one hand, we are drawn towards the position that the "value of the knowledge is established through its relationship to the knower" (personal knowledge); on the other hand, knowledge "consists of the accumulated traditions of the ages, traditions which have a value external to and independent of the knower" (p. 144). Berlak and Berlak reference Bernstein's

concept of "framing" to capture the personal-public knowledge dilemma:

> Bernstein (1975, p. 89) says there "is another aspect of the boundary relationship between what may be taught and what may not be taught and consequently another aspect to framing... the relationship between non-school everyday community knowledge of the teacher or taught and the educational knowledge transmitted in the pedagogical relationship" (Berlak and Berlak, 1981, p. 171 [footnote 12]).

What is valued in school then is not universalistic, nor is it to be taken for granted; rather, resolutions of the personal-public knowledge dilemma imply different constructions of what is important or valuable about schooling. If public knowledge is divorced from personal knowledge, do students learn to respect or ridicule public knowledge and those who teach it. Does emphasis on public knowledge lead to social stratification based on educational credentials? Is the personal knowledge of minority children likely to be valued in the same way as the personal knowledge of "mainstream children?" These questions focus attention to the ways language is used at home and in school, and in shaping what we value and reward, in our constructions of schools and society. In the words of Annie Mae, the grandmother of one of the children in Heath's (1983) study:

> Our children learn how it all means, un-er-ah, I guess what it all means, you'd say. They gotta know what works, and what don't, you sit in a chair, but if you hafta, you can sit on other things too -- a stool, a trunk, a step, a bucket. Whatcha call it ain't so important as whatcha do with it. That's what things 'n people are for, ain't it? (Heath, 1983, p. 112).

Berlak and Berlak raise another dilemma, that of "knowledge as given v. knowledge as problematical" (p. 147) also with reference Bernstein (1975) and his formulation of educational knowledge codes (collection code v. integrated

or unified code). The distinction allows us to view knowledge as having strong, distinctive and legitimate boundaries versus viewing knowledge boundaries as limited and somewhat arbitrary. Berlak and Berlak suggest that the student's ability and willingness to connect knowledge to social reality may be in part dictated by how this dilemma is resolved. One might also ask whether access to "knowledge as problematical" may be limited to particular ethnic, racial or socio-economic groups. And if so, does communication of knowledge as given lead to the segmenting of knowledge and social analysis and in turn may limit its potential for critical analysis.

Breaking Spells by Recognizing Complexity in the Talk of Children. The way to understand "what is going on" in the behavioral displays of the classroom begins by listening and watching what children say and do. The title of Paley's (1986) article "On Listening to what the Children Say" suggests that in order understand what is going on in the classroom, teachers need to listen instead of talk, and explore the child's perspective instead of their own. Paley says:

> When we are curious about a child's word's and our responses to those words, the child feels respected. The child is respected... Older children have already learned to fear exposing their uncommon ideas. On the other hand, the young child continually operates from unexpected premises. The older student's thinking is closer to an adult's and easier to fathom... Yet, third graders and high school students struggle with their own set of confusions, fantasies, and opinions that need to be listened to, studied, compared, and connected (p. 10).

Paley's teacher becomes a "glue dabber," constantly seeking ways to attach meaning to the partial truths and sometimes incomplete understandings presented in the conversations of the children. Paley concludes that "we are, all of us, actors trying to find the meaning of the scenes in which we find

ourselves. The scripts are not yet fully written, so we must listen with curiosity and great care to the main characters who are, of course, the children" (1986, p. 14).

Summary and Conclusion

Bernstein views language as both subjective and objective. Subjectively, language structures an individual's intentions and thought processes; objectively, it preserves and makes public the store of knowledge of human society. The social structure becomes part of the individual through social relations. The sharing of language is the basic way in which the objective world becomes part of the individual consciousness. By attaching names to objects and actions, we give meaning to our environment. Language gives us a system of interpretation. We think, plan, evaluate, generalize, hypothesize and look at consequences of action. We construct our own reality. it is not simply an "inner reality" because the categories set up which give our inner dialogue meaning are derived from the social structure around us. At the same time, an individual is able to externalize thoughts and feelings allowing others to interpret them. Language then gives the individual a way to organize and control phenomena and at the same time, language controls the individual.

Ultimately, we reach the conclusion that a critical reading of Bernstein is important to the extent that it helps us define our own worlds and recognize what is important and why. Recall Bernstein's earlier description his experiences at the London School of Economics as "undisciplined" and his "agonizing difficulties in expressing what I was trying to grasp" (1971, p.

4). This admission reminds the reader of the complexity encountered in Bernstein's ideas and some of the difficulty experienced when reading his work.

To what extent should a researcher be held responsible for multiple applications of his theories? This paper suggests some of the limitations of classifying Bernstein's research as an example of cultural deficit or educational disadvantage explanation of school failure. Such an interpretation ignores the complexity of Bernstein's formulations and other evidence which suggests that Bernstein never intended his work to label working class or minority culture as deficient. Quite the contrary, it is argued that Bernstein's work testifies to the vitality and richness inherent in the way people talk.

Does Bernstein's work illustrate how children come to school with "different language patterns" built upon social class and family relationships which are labeled in school? Yes, but the "difference view" does not tell us what or who needs to change; it simply disguises a "deficit view."

The bewitchment perspective argues that language castes a spell in which we take for granted what is presented to us, at home, at play, at school, at work. Bernstein's sociology of language looks for ways to break the spell of the "given," the taken-for-granted. Just as the child in the story "The Emperor's New Clothes" recognizes nakedness, we look for examples of tomfoolery, of categories which serve the vested interests of their "tailors." We learn by listening, by recognizing "collusion," by unearthing the seeds of dilemmas, by recognizing the complexity of reality; We postpone the hasty judgment, the vested evaluation. Life becomes the search for connections, for meanings, for acts of recognition.

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